

# FSIS DIRECTIVE

5420.8

6/25/04

## HOMELAND SECURITY THREAT CONDITION RESPONSE – COMMUNICATION AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS PROCEDURES

### I. PURPOSE

A. This directive details the Communication and Public Affairs Procedures that the Office of Public Affairs, Education, and Outreach (OPAEO) personnel will follow in the event of an Orange or Red Alert declaration by the Department of Homeland Security. In the event that an Orange or Red Alert is declared, OPAEO personnel are to follow the instructions in this directive for the duration of the heightened Alert.

B. This directive also:

- provides specific emergency communication instructions on how OPAEO personnel will respond in the event of a change in threat level to Orange and Red whether or not there is a specific threat involving the food supply; and
- establishes effective communication to address food security concerns of stakeholders in order to reassure the public of the safety of the food supply and protect public health.

### II. [RESERVED]

### III. [RESERVED]

### IV. REFERENCES

FSIS Directive 5420.1, Homeland Security Threat Condition Response – Food Security Verification Procedures  
OPAEO Emergency Communications Plan  
OPAEO Emergency Operations Checklist

### V. BACKGROUND

In 2002, the White House Office of Homeland Security established a Homeland Security Advisory System based on color to provide a comprehensive and effective means to disseminate information regarding the risk of terrorist acts to Federal, State, and local authorities and to the American people. A declaration of a Threat Condition

Orange by the Department of Homeland Security indicates that there is a high risk of terrorist attacks. A declaration of a Threat Condition Red reflects a severe risk of terrorist attacks. While the threat declaration may or may not involve the nation's food and agricultural sector specifically, it is imperative that any such declarations be communicated effectively and rapidly to all program areas within FSIS so that appropriate actions can be taken to respond to the threats and to ensure the security of meat, poultry, and egg products. Because of the emergency nature of responding to a credible threat of a terrorist attack, OPAEO personnel must clearly understand their roles and what will be required of them in order to properly respond to that threat.

## **VI. NOTIFICATION**

The Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) Office of Food Security and Emergency Preparedness (OFSEP) will inform the FSIS Administrator and the senior executive leadership of all FSIS program areas and communicate threat condition declarations to OPAEO personnel via e-mail notification. OPAEO personnel should only begin implementing these procedures when instructed to do so by the OPAEO Assistant Administrator (AA) or designee. In that event, OPAEO personnel are to follow the instructions in this directive for the duration of the declared heightened threat condition. Because of the roles played by OPAEO personnel during the performance of their assigned duties, they are likely to be in a position to have to respond to stakeholders on food security issues. OPAEO will be prepared to inform stakeholders of Agency actions taken under Threat Condition Orange or Red.

A. In the event of a declaration of any Threat Condition Orange or Red by the Department of Homeland Security, the FSIS OFSEP will issue an e-mail letter to all employees notifying them of the heightened threat condition.

B. The following actions are to be taken in the event of a declaration of:

### **1. Threat Condition Orange by the Department of Homeland Security with no specific threat to the food and agriculture sector:**

a. OPAEO personnel will continue normal operations and take no further action unless instructed to do so by the OPAEO AA.

b. OPAEO will coordinate with the USDA Office of Communications and FSIS Emergency Management Committee (EMC) to determine the next steps.

c. OPAEO will coordinate with OPHS to assess the need to expand the operating hours for monitoring of the Meat and Poultry Hotline (the Hotline) and the Consumer Complaint Monitoring System (CCMS).

d. The senior executive leadership of OPAEO will review with staff the OPAEO Emergency Communications Plan, complete the appropriate section of the OPAEO Emergency Operations Checklist, and review emergency procedures per USDA Office of Operations and FSIS OFSEP e-mail notifications.

### **2. Threat Condition Red by the Department of Homeland Security with no**

**specific threat to the food and agriculture sector:**

- a. The senior executive leadership of OPAEO will take all actions on the Emergency Operations Checklist listed under Threat Condition Orange and Red with no specific threat to the food and agriculture sector.
- b. Assess the need to activate the OPAEO Emergency Communications Plan.
- c. In coordination with USDA Office of Communications, OPAEO will notify industry, employees, and other appropriate constituents of the change in threat level, with any necessary instructions, and provide updates as information becomes available.
- d. OPAEO will coordinate with OPHS to expand the operating hours for monitoring of the Hotline and the CCMS.

**3. Threat Condition Orange involving a specific threat to food and agriculture sector or a particular product or process:**

The senior executive leadership of OPAEO will take all actions on the Emergency Operations Checklist specified under Orange and Red with no specific threat to the food and agriculture sector, and under Orange with a specific threat to the food and agriculture sector.

**4. Threat Condition Red involving a specific threat to the food and agriculture sector or a particular product or process:**

In addition to taking all actions on the Emergency Operations Checklist specified under Orange and Red with a specific threat to the food and agriculture sector, the senior executive leadership of OPAEO will activate the OPAEO Emergency Communications Plan.

C. Downgrading of a threat condition will be communicated by OFSEP to OPAEO personnel through the senior executive leadership of OPAEO. Upon receiving such notification, OPAEO will return to normal operating procedures.

All questions related to this directive should be directed through normal supervisory channels.

*/s/ Philip S. Derfler*

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